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SUBJECT: VP TAHA UNYIELDING ON UN TROOPS, ANNOUNCES DARFUR  
INTERIM AUTHORITY

11. (SBU) Summary: During a September 18 press conference, Vice President Ali Osman Taha maintained the Sudanese government's complete rejection of UN intervention in Darfur, denied allegations of escalating violence, and announced the establishment of a Darfur interim authority. He also criticized US involvement on the issue and accused senior USG officials of disingenuous promises to normalize relations with Sudan. Press reports following the conference downplayed the announcement of the interim authority. End summary.

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NO UN FORCES BUT NEW INTERIM AUTHORITY  
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12. (U) In a September 18 press conference at the Council of Ministers, Vice President Ali Osman Taha held the line against UN intervention in Darfur and said the government will work to unify internal opposition to international forces. While denying reports of escalating violence in the region, he announced that an interim authority for Darfur would be established by constitutional decree next week and that funds would be allocated for development. "I assure you that UN forces will not enter Sudan," said Taha. "The UN has never invaded a country that was a UN member." He said that the only solution to the stalemate with the international community is for the West to understand that Sudan's position is unyielding and that it will not "bargain away its sovereignty."

13. (U) Taha called on African leaders to firmly reject UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1706 and warned that international forces would lead to chaos because the people of Darfur would rise up against them, causing a "second Iraq." He questioned opposition parties' support for UN intervention in Darfur, particularly that of the Umma Party, in contrast to their previous rejection of international forces in Southern Sudan after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). When asked by one journalist why the Sudanese government opposed UN action in Darfur but had accepted a UN presence in Southern Sudan, Taha explained that the UN mandate in the South is a monitoring mission while the one described in UNSCR 1706 would concentrate on peacekeeping, policing, and judicial activities that would undermine Sudanese sovereignty. He also accused the international community of being run by the "Zionist lobby."

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US IS NOT GOD  
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14. (U) Taha condemned US interference in the conflict and its

demands for UN re-hatting, saying "not all US wishes will be realized. It is not a god that has to be obeyed." Taha railed against unfulfilled USG promises to normalize relations, remove Sudan from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and lift sanctions that he claimed had been made by then-Special Envoy John Danforth, then-Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick, and A/S Frazer. He complained that Sudanese officials still have difficulty obtaining visas to the US and are limited to a 25-mile radius of Washington and New York City. According to Taha, the Sudanese government had requested that sanctions be lifted on Southern Sudan in order to solidify the CPA. USG rejection of this proposal, combined with the fact that the international community has met only a fraction of its donor pledges in support of the CPA, indicates that they are not truly interested in peace. He also objected to the Department's recently-released International Religious Freedom Report and said that the USG had ignored the tremendous progress Sudan had made in the last year.

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MEDIA COVERAGE VARIES  
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¶5. (SBU) Despite numerous public announcements about the press conference beforehand, it was not broadcast live on Sudanese radio or television. Al Jazeera began coverage, but the feed was cut after two minutes, reportedly at the government's request. Sudan television later broadcast the press conference in its entirety on the evening of September 18. Press coverage of the event varied on September 19. Several Arabic-language papers praised Taha for his hard line against UN forces and his criticism of previous USG promises as a "mirage." The English-language newspapers and the official Sudanese news agency, SUNA, downplayed Taha's more

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inflammatory remarks and emphasized the government's desire to find a political solution. A common refrain quoted Taha as saying that "the government does not stand against the international community or the UN." Only one newspaper, the pro-DUP "Al Khabr," emphasized the announcement of the Darfur interim authority in its headline, though it was mentioned in the body of most articles with few substantive details.

HUME